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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001846

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: PIONEER SETTLER BENNY KATSOVER INSPIRES VIOLENCE
REF: JERUSALEM 1710

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Settler pioneer Benny Katsover told Poloff that, as head of the "Samaria Action Committee," he does not encourage violence directly, but admitted that young settlers under his direction do resort to violence. As Katsover spoke, settlers reacted to the evacuation of Shevut Ami B outpost (east of Nablus) by attacking officers, burning olive trees, and firing weapons. Katsover led the establishment of the first settlements near Hebron and Nablus in 1968 and 1974 and headed the Samaria Regional Council for 13 years. END SUMMARY.

New Settler Strategy Results
in Heightened Violence

12. (C) Poloff visited settler pioneer Benny Katsover at his house in Elon Moreh settlement (east of Nablus) on October 2. At Samaria Regional Council Chairman Gershon Mesika's request this past spring, Katsover took leadership of the "Samaria Action Committee". Katsover's committee drafted and published a strategy to create sometimes violent diversions during IDF actions against West Bank settlement outposts. The strategy has regularly been employed in the past few months, resulting in higher levels of violence. According to Katsover, the committee's "new policy" is designed to "increase the price tag" of IDF action by calling for settlers in groups of ten to block roads, set fires, protest at IDF bases, and march near Palestinian villages (REFTEL).

13. (C) The strategy has led to early-warning cell phone alerts of IDF activity, mobilizing settler groups to respond with diversionary tactics. As Katsover hosted Poloff on October 2, Israeli security forces carried out the evacuation of Shevut Ami B outpost near Kedumim settlement (west of Nablus), sparking the deployment of settlers across the northern West Bank. Rabbis for Human Rights activist Zacharia Sadeh told Poloff some 25 olive trees were burned at Kadum village adjacent to Kedumim settlement during the rampage, resulting in the arrest of two settler youth. Simultaneously, Yitzhar settler Avi Shikratzi was arrested for firing a weapon at Asira al-Qabaliyah village and was released on October 3 after a court hearing. Meanwhile, Katsover's fellow settler pioneer, former Kedumim mayor Daniella Weiss, was arrested for assaulting an officer but was released to house arrest on October 3.

"Not recommending violence"

14. (C) Asked if he was using his committee to encourage settler violence, Katsover told Poloff, "I recommend that kids do not enter Arab villages or use physical violence." With regard to Israeli security forces, Katsover told Poloff, "I don't advocate violence against the army, but the police

are different." In addition to the new strategy, Katsover said, the committee is working to redefine the settler image so that Israelis understand "the need to keep us here."

Population one million

15. (C) Katsover told Poloff that the settlement movement's goal is to reach a Jewish population of one million in the West Bank. "From zero to 100,000 was a challenge; from 300,000 to a million will be much easier," he told Poloff. Once settlers reach the one million mark, he said, Palestinians will "lose the motivation" for a state. Katsover said that, if an evacuation compensation bill passes, "eighty to ninety percent of settlers will refuse it," and replacements would soon re-occupy the houses of anyone who leaves. On the two-state solution, Katsover called American policy "illogical, unjust, and immoral," and leading only to the creation of "another terrorist state in the Middle East."

Biographical Note

16. (C) Benny Katsover, a founder of the Gush Emunim settlement movement, was among the first settlers who checked into the Park Hotel in Hebron during Passover of 1968, setting in motion the process leading to the establishment of Israeli settlements inside the town. He helped establish Kiryat Arba settlement adjacent to Hebron, where he lived for seven years. In 1974 he led the effort to establish the settlements that surround Nablus today, first

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(unsuccessfully) at Sebastia (northwest of Nablus) and later at Kedumim and Elon Moreh, where he currently lives. He chaired the Samaria Regional Council for 13 years in the eighties and nineties. His return to a leadership role heading the "Samaria Action Committee" is widely seen as an effort to mobilize more hard-core settlers frustrated with past settler attempts to cooperate with the GOI.
WALLES